

LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting Saturday, January 20, 2007 Glendale Civic Center

Committee Members Present

Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group
Julie Decker, Bureau of Land Management
Bill Dowdle, Arizona State Land Department
Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower
Jennifer Martin, Arizona Game and Fish Commission
David Hoyle, Sportsmen Group
Jon Fugate, Sportsmen Group
Joe Underwood, Sportsmen Group
Tami Emmett, Coronado National Forest
Scott Heap, Sportsmen Group
Joe King, Livestock Grower

Committee Members Absent

Dennis Moroney, Livestock Grower
James O'Haco, Livestock Grower
Duane Coleman, Livestock Grower

Others Present

Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD
Sal Palazzolo, Landowner Relations Program Manager, AGFD
Joe Sacco, Watercraft/OHV Law Enforcement Program Manager, AGFD
Ron Sieg, Flagstaff Regional Supervisor, AGFD
Blaine Bickford, Sportsman
Brian Cypert, Sportsman
Charlie Hansen, Sportsman

Meeting Notes

The Landowner-Lessee/ Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 9:07 a.m. An introduction of those present was initiated.

New Members/Presentations

Sal Palazzolo presented plaques to Joe King and Scott Heap in appreciation for serving on the Committee. Mr. King comes from the King's Anvil Ranch near Sasabe; Mr. Heap is president of the Southeastern Arizona Sportsmen Club.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for July 25, 2006.

Commissioner's Comments

This was the first Committee meeting for Commissioner Jennifer Martin, the new liaison from the Arizona Game and Fish Commission. She said that she was looking forward to working with the Committee and then allowed the meeting to proceed.

Updates from Land Management Agencies

Bill Dowdle, sitting in for Stephen Williams, gave an update from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). He answered questions about how the sales of State Trust lands near the Desert Wells Multi-Use Area would effect recreation. Joe Sacco and David Hoyle talked about some of the issues arising on the multi-use area.

Tami Emmett informed the Committee of some new United States Forest Service (USFS) regulations which focus on roads and access. The Travel Management Rule requires each national forest to designate roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicles. The revised Roadless Area Conservation Rule allows state governors to petition the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture with recommendations for specific management of inventoried roadless areas in their states; the AZ Game and Fish Department (AGFD) is assisting Governor Napolitano in developing a petition. The Transportation Analysis Plan involves the public in the inventory and management of unauthorized roads. Tami Emmett told the Committee where they could find more information on these items. The Committee discussed what effects new USFS processes would have on water developments on the national forests.

Julie Decker gave an update from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). She informed the Committee that the BLM was still addressing access at the east entrance to the Aravaipa Wilderness; she added that this is a big issue that will have effects on more than just the Klondyke Road. The BLM continues to work on several resource management plans for the state and is seeking public comment.

Landowner Relations Program Updates/Current Issues

Sal Palazzolo gave the updates which exhibited the broad range of projects that the Landowner Relations Program is involved in. The projects ranged from landscape-scale grassland restoration and conservation easements to volunteer clean-up days and a graduate student researching attitudes and sustainability in pronghorn antelope populations and hunter access in Chino Valley. The Committee discussed the desire to expand the road maintenance program, which has proven itself very beneficial to both landowners and sportsmen. Joe King suggested that the U.S. Border Patrol should contribute to the road maintenance in the southern part of the state; Mr. Palazzolo explained difficulties of getting an intergovernmental agreement with that agency. A motion was made to recommend that the AGFD investigate options of acquiring an additional road grader machine and a second operator or possible funding sources to contract out road maintenance work.

Update on Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Legislation

Joe Sacco, Watercraft/OHV Law Enforcement Program Manager, gave information to the Committee about past and current efforts to get new legislation to manage off-highway vehicles. Last year's bill for the "Copper Sticker Program" died at the Legislature. A new bill will be introduced by Representative Weiers to implement an annual flat registration fee for OHV's. This plan would result in lower fees for the OHV owner and a funding source for ASLD, AGFD, and Arizona State Parks to use for OHV management. The Committee asked questions about how the funding could be used.

Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions

David Hoyle informed the Committee about problems that the lessees were experiencing at the Desert Wells Multi-Use Area. He said, even after all the access enhancements and information and education efforts by agencies, non-government organizations, and volunteers, the problems still exist and it is frustrating to the ranchers and sportsmen alike. Mr. Hoyle said that a serious increase in law enforcement is the only thing that will improve the situation. Scott Heap agreed that violators won't change until there is more consistent enforcement. Mark Weise explained current limitations regarding OHV enforcement. The proposed OHV legislation included dedicated funding for 13,000 additional hours of enforcement by state agencies and also makes grant funds available to county sheriff's offices for additional enforcement. There was discussion regarding other things that could be done at the multi-use area such as requesting an OHV sting operation, replacing signs which were removed during the widening of Ironwood Road, and implementing the ambassador program.

Next Meeting

The Committee decided that the next meeting would be scheduled in conjunction with the Arizona Cattle Growers Association (ACGA) Convention, which will be held at the Apache Gold Casino in Globe. An effort will be made to schedule the LLSRC meeting on either August 1 or 2; Committee members will be informed of the date and time of that meeting once it has been determined.

Action Items:

1. Investigate options of acquiring an additional road grader machine and a second operator or possible funding sources to contract out road maintenance work. (LRP Staff)
2. Meeting minutes distributed. (LRP Staff)
3. Contact ACGA to schedule the summer LLSRC meeting at such a time as to avoid conflicts with ASLD, Federal Land, and Game meetings. Inform Committee. (LRP Staff)

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